

**News Release**  
**U.S. Department of Justice**  
*United States Attorney*  
*District of Rhode Island*

**October 26, 2005**

**Two guilty in seizure of nearly 62 kilograms of cocaine**

A federal jury in Providence yesterday found **Pedro Gonzales**, 32, address unknown, guilty of a cocaine-trafficking conspiracy involving nearly 62 kilograms of cocaine. **Julian Sahagun Rodriguez**, 25, of Woodburn, Oregon, previously pleaded guilty to his role in the conspiracy. In what is believed to be the largest cocaine seizure ever made in Rhode Island, Drug Enforcement Administration agents took three duffel bags full of cocaine from a car in Providence in June.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty verdict, which the jury returned yesterday in U.S. District Court, Providence, following about four hours of deliberation and a two-day trial before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres. The jury found a third defendant, **Franklin Soto Pena**, 38, of New Bedford, not guilty of any charges in connection with the cocaine.

During the trial, Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephanie S. Browne presented evidence that, on June 7, DEA Task Force agents followed a Nissan Maxima to a driveway at 167-169 Lenox Avenue in Providence. Gonzales was driving the Maxima and Rodriguez was in the front passenger seat. Three large duffel bags were in the back seat. When the Maxima pulled into the driveway, Pena approached on foot from the vicinity of the house and garage and, according to evidence presented in the trial, opened the rear door and looked into the back seat. Providence Police officers and DEA agents then approached the three men.

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In the rear seat of the Maxima, agents saw that one of the duffel bags was open and contained what appeared to be kilogram packages of cocaine. The three duffel bags held 64 packages of cocaine, weighing a total of about 61.4 kilograms.

The jury found Gonzales guilty of two charges: conspiracy to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine and possessing with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine. On October 14, Rodriguez pleaded guilty to the same charges. Pena had been charged with the same offenses; Judge Torres dismissed the possession charge and the jury acquitted Pena of the conspiracy charge.

Each of the offenses carries a minimum penalty of ten years imprisonment and a maximum of life plus a \$4,000,000 fine. Rodriguez is scheduled to be sentenced on January 27, Gonzales on February 10. Both men are detained at the Wyatt Federal Detention Center, Central Falls.

Drug investigators believe that this was the largest cocaine seizure ever made in Rhode Island. In 1987, DEA and U.S. Customs agents seized 55 kilograms of cocaine that had been smuggled into the Port of Providence aboard the Magranel, a ship out of Barranquilla Colombia. Last year, Rhode Island State Police detectives working with the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force seized 34 kilograms of cocaine from a car and a storage bin in Warwick.

The **Drug Enforcement Administration** and **Providence Police** investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Browne and Assistant U.S. Attorney Adi Goldstein are prosecuting it.